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Office of the Director

RL:0451

SB 1763-82 RELATING TO STATE PARKS

Statement for
Senate Committee on
Ecology, Environment and Recreation
Public Hearing - 23 February 1982

By
Jacquelin N. Miller, Environmental Center
Diane C. Drigot, Environmental Studies

SB 1763 and related bills HB 305 and HB 61 were reviewed by the Environmental Center last year. Because the rationale presented at that time remains pertinent, we are submitting copies of our earlier testimony for your consideration. As in the case of our last year's statement, this statement does not reflect an institutional position of the University of Hawaii.

As previously indicated, it would appear that most of the duties of the state park ranger corps assigned by SB 1763 duplicate the existing duties assigned to the conservation and resource enforcement officers under HRS 199-3 and the state parks enforcement officers under HRS 184-5. The only substantive addition to be provided by SB 1763 would be the provision in paragraph 199-(b)(3) to "Promote through direct public contact, pleasurable and safe use of the state park system."

The broad police-enforcement powers for State lands under the Department of Land and Natural Resources are recognized in existing statutes (HRS 199-3). Specific state park ranger needs would appear to be more appropriately addressed by amendment to Chapter 184-5. The police-enforcement powers are already provided to state parks "enforcement officers" by HRS 184-5. What is needed is amendment to recognize "state parks rangers" as "enforcement officers" and the need and responsibility for public educational duties in addition to the police powers for park rangers.

As was pointed out in our earlier testimony, the public awareness of the duties, responsibilities, and assistance of Park Rangers in the National Park Service and in the park services of other states is widely recognized. The change in title of the State Parks Enforcement Officers to State Park Rangers and the provision for public educational responsibilities could encourage the necessary public support, awareness and cooperation for a successful State Park Ranger Program.



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SB 1763
(HB 305)
RELATING TO STATE PARKS

Statement for
Senate Committee on
Ecology, Environment and Recreation
Public Hearing - 24 February 1981

By
Diane Drigot, Environmental Center
Jacquelin Miller, Environmental Center

SB 1763 recognizes the need for greater security services at State Parks in Hawaii and would establish a park ranger program within the Department of Land and Natural Resources by amendments to Chapter HRS 199. Our statement on SB 1763 does not represent an institutional position of the University of Hawaii.

The Environmental Center testified earlier on a related bill, HB 61, as to our support for the establishment of a park ranger program. A copy of this earlier testimony is attached for your information.

While we fully support the intent of SB 1763 we question the need for the amendments to Chapter 199 as proposed in SB 1763. Specifically we note the following:

The duties assigned to the State park ranger corps by SB 1763 essentially duplicate the duties assigned to the existing conservation and resource enforcement officers under HRS 199-3 and State parks enforcement officers under HRS 184-5.

The only substantive addition to the existing statutes that would be provided by SB 1763 is the recognition of the duty to "promote through direct public contact, pleasurable and safe use of the state park system."

Since existing statutes (HRS 199-3) already provide for the broad, title 12 enforcement personnel it would seem more appropriate to address the recognized park security problem by amendment to Chapter 184-5. Police powers are already provided by HRS 184-5, however amendment is needed to recognize the duties of the present state parks enforcement officers to include the educational and public contact responsibilities traditionally associated with "Park Rangers". Because public awareness of the duties, responsibilities, and assistance of Park Rangers in the National Park Service and in other states is widely recognized, the change in title of the State Parks Enforcement Officers to State Park Rangers could encourage the needed public support, awareness and cooperation for State Park Ranger Programs.



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Office of the Director

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HB 61 RELATING TO A PARK RANGER PROGRAM

Statement for
House Committee
Water, Land Use, Development and Hawaiian Affairs
Public Hearing, 12 February 1981

By
Charles Lamoureux, Botany
Lyndon Wester, Geography
Mark D. Merlin, General Science
Diane C. Drigot, Environmental Center
Jacquelin Miller, Environmental Center

HB 61 would establish a Park Ranger Program for Hawaii to facilitate the safe and enjoyable usage of our State parks by residents and visitors. The Environmental Center statement on this bill does not represent an institutional position of the University of Hawaii.

The Department of Land and Natural Resources is delegated with the responsibility (HRS 184-6) to "preserve the parks and parkways in the State park system in their natural condition so far as may be consistent with their use and safety, and improve them in such a manner as to retain to a maximum extent their natural scenic, historic, and wildlife values for the use and enjoyment of the public" (emphasis added). The numerous incidents of crime and violence as well as the widespread and costly acts of vandalism, reduce, restrict, and in some cases eliminate the "use and enjoyment" by the public of Hawaii's State parks. Hence, park land is acquired, facilities constructed and maintained yet underutilized, representing a cost to the community not only in monetary terms but also in the loss of recreational opportunities and environmental appreciation developed through the use of a State Park. The creation of the proposed Park Ranger Program could provide a significant improvement to that situation.

We are pleased with the recognized two-fold need of the Park Ranger Program; that of providing specially trained personnel for police action and enforcement of laws, rules and regulations, and the need to provide educational information to Park visitors.

The development of the proposed Park Ranger program with appropriately trained personnel should greatly facilitate the public's use of our State park facilities. We suggest that in the development of this program, DLNR solicit information from the National Park Service and other States with similar programs, such as California, for background information and guidance in establishing the needs and direction of Hawaii's program. Since many of the recognized problems associated with State Parks apply equally to the county parks, it would seem appropriate to consider cooperative Ranger education programs with consideration for developing, establishing or sharing joint County/State educational/training facilities for the personnel involved. Perhaps a Park Ranger education program could be developed through cooperation between the police departments and the University of Hawaii Community College System. This cooperative approach would also facilitate clarification of police and Ranger responsibilities.

The success of the Program will depend on the development of well informed, intelligent, trained and sensitive rangers who can respond appropriately to necessary enforcement situations as well as providing the visitors with educational information relevant to the specific park environments. We would hope that the creation of the Park Ranger Program will further enhance the contemporary interest in "Aloha Aina" and a much needed expansion of good will among our citizens.